

Thought for Friday 10th July 2020 prepared by Margaret Tuffin

The following words are sometimes sung in Iona Abbey before a Bible reading.

“Listen to the words which God has spoken Listen to the one who is close at hand Listen to the voice behind creation Listen even if you don’t understand”

There are parts of the Bible that are difficult to understand.

This from. Matthew 15 21-28 is one such part.

Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out “Lord, son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is demon-possessed and suffering terribly.” Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, “Send her away, for she keeps crying after us.”

He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel”

The woman came and knelt before him. “Lord, help me”, she said.

He replied, “It is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to the dogs.”

“Yes, it is Lord,” she said, “Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the master’s table.”

Then Jesus said to her, “Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.” And her daughter was healed at that moment.

For the words of God in Scripture, for the word of God among us, for the word of God within us, Thanks be to God.

During the last few weeks on a Sunday evening at 6.30, I have really enjoyed watching “Holy Shed” with Rev. Dave Tomlinson. The Shed is a place for challenge, controversial issues and prayers. It is a place for listening to different points of view and what God may be saying to individuals.

Dave was asked the question “Was Jesus a racist?”

He looked at this passage from Matthew where Jesus is shown as very human. This Canaanite woman is not one of Jesus’ people. Jesus, that day, listened to the pleas of the woman and because of that, her daughter was healed. Jesus saw the wider picture of God in the voice and face of the Canaanite woman.

If Jesus could change his opinion so can we by listening and appreciating the other’s point of view. May we listen to what God has to say to us as individuals and listen to others to make for more understanding.

Michaela Youngson sums this up in her writing.

QUOTE

To listen to another person, really listen, not just hearing words, but what lies behind them.

To listen like that is to make the other person important.

When we really listen, hearing the pain or joy, hearing the loneliness or confidence of the other person, then we are giving something to them.

We are truly putting our neighbour before ourself, we are saying “You are important to me. You matter and what you say matters”

In the moments when you listen to someone else, you are no longer putting yourself first, you stop being at the centre of the universe.

The more people really listen to each other the more peaceful the world will be the closer we will be to living in God’s will.

When we stop shouting, when our voices and confusions are stilled, When we no longer make our own opinion law, and other people's folly, then into the silence that follows will come music and bird song and perhaps even the sound of trees growing.

And quietly, lovingly, almost silently,
God's voice will be heard saying,
"At last you have allowed me to exist.
At last you can hear my voice.
At long last, my child, you have learnt to love me."
UNQUOTE

From Singing the Faith 444 and perhaps adding another line. TO LISTEN MORE CLOSELY Day
by day, dear Lord of thee, three things I pray: to see thee more clearly, to love thee more dearly, to
follow thee more nearly, day by day.